



Equity Policy Advisory Committee (EPAC)
Draft Minutes
Thursday, February 13, 2014
6:30 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

Present: Margaret Blair-Grant (Parent); Christopher Penrose (Co-Chair, Success beyond Limits Representative); Kowser Omer (Co-Chair, Parent); Saida Sabrie (Somali Parent Liaison Coalition); Adwoa Gyasi-Nimako (Volunteer, Reaching Up); Derik Chica (Latin American Education Network); Nathan Gilbert (ICAC Rep); Sharon Simpson (Urban Alliance on Race Relations); Ortega Tapambwa (YouthLeaps); Byron Gray (Jane Finch Community Centre); Trustee Maria Rodrigues (Trustee, Ward 9)

Tele-Conference: Saada Awaleh –God (Community Member)

TDSB Staff: Executive Superintendent Jim Spyropoulos (TDSB, Equity and Inclusive Schools); TDSB); Christine Dorcin (Teacher, Ogden Junior P.S.); Jyoti Khona (Teacher, TDSB); Chelsea Takalo (Student Equity Program Advisor, TDSB); Andrea Williams (Teacher, TDSB)

Guests: Almaz Reda (Chair of Jane/Finch's Caring Village Board of Directors); Maryan Hilowle (Chair of Firgrove Community Learning Centre Board of Directors & Parent); Lorraine Anderson (Coordinator for Firgrove Community Learning Centre & Parent); Carlis Dunbar (Parent); Aaron Woznica (Student Placement from City of Toronto, Community Development Unit); Vanessa Wiltshire (City Adult Learning Centre)

Regrets: Imam Abdul Hai Patel (Former Commissioner of Ontario Human Rights); Christa Romaldi; Kayode Brown (Just Bgraphic); Diane DeiAmoah (Central Co-ordinating Principal, Equity and Inclusive Schools); Kevin Sutton (Equity and Inclusive Schools, TDSB); Andrea Cross (Teacher, TDSB); Augustre Munro (Parent)

Recorder: Linda Mendonca (Committee Assistant, Parent & Community Engagement Office)

#	Item/Information/Discussion	Action/Recommendation
1.)	Call to order-Welcome/ Introductions (Co-Chairs) The Meeting was called to order at 6:40 PM. Roundtable introductions were made.	
2.)	Approval of Quorum (Co-Chairs) ***Nathan, seconded by Derik, moved to approve the agenda. All approved. Motion carried.	
3.)	Approval of Agenda (Co-Chairs) *** MOTION: Nathan, seconded by Kowser moved to approve the agenda with the following amendments. All approved. Motion carried. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Move Firgrove Presentation after approval of minutes – as Item #4 - Defer LAEN Report to next meeting - Add: Request from Derik Under Other Business – Strike Working Group – re: Student Councils in 	Add LAEN Report to March Agenda.

	Schools	
4.)	<p>Approval of Minutes Jan 16 14 (Co-Chairs) ***MOTION: Nathan, seconded by Christine moved to approve the January 16th minutes. All approved. Motion carried.</p>	<p>The approved minutes of January 16 to be posted on the website.</p>
5.)	<p>Firgrove Community Learning Centre Presentation</p> <p>Representatives from the Firgrove Learning Centre and Caring Village attended the meeting to talk about the impact the Suspension and Transfer policies are having on their communities and to request EPAC support of their recommendations to the Ministry of Education to review and evaluate the policies. .</p> <p>Almaz Reda, Chair of the Jane/Finch Caring Village Board of Directors provided a brief history of the Firgrove Learning Centre and Caring Village. It is a grassroots organization that's been in existence for 20 years and was founded and run by parents, focussed on empowering children by involving parents. It is located in the Jane/Finch area. Some of the issues impacting the community include: children being transferred from grade 1 – 12 without actually meeting the grade requirements, and parents not being informed when their children are being suspended without a letter stating the reasons why. The organization has been advocating for these same issues for the past 20 years. Firgrove prepared a letter to the Ministry of Education with recommendations to review the validity and effectiveness of the Transfer and Suspension policies on the education of children. Firgrove is also requesting to know how many kids are being transferred, and are requesting that teachers be trained appropriately to work with issues affecting newcomers.</p> <p>Superintendent Jim S. suggested that EPAC invite appropriate staff including (e.g. Ken Jeffers, Ted Libera, and Beth Butcher) to come and clarify the Transfer, and Suspension policies, and to invite Firgrove to come back to this meeting to hear the information to help strengthen their recommendations. Jim also suggested that someone from data be invited for conversation about why some children are more adversely affected and how policies intersect with the issues.</p>	<p>Staff will invite appropriate staff to come and clarify the transfer and suspension policies and process at a future meeting and to invite representatives from the Firgrove Learning Centre and Caring Village back to the meeting.</p> <p>Staff to provide an update at the next meeting.</p>
6.)	<p>Follow Up re: Provincial Advocate Presentation</p> <p>Irwin Elman, the Provincial Advocate shared at the last meeting that his office has resources for EPAC initiatives. Co-Chair Penrose asked if anyone would be interested in discussing initiatives EPAC can work on. Nathan, Kowser, and Derik expressed interest in being part of the discussion.</p>	
7.)	<p>CAC Review Delegation</p> <p>Co-Chair Penrose reported that he attended the Deputation to Planning and Priorities Committee regarding the CAC Review recommendations on January 23rd. The deputation was very well received and influenced the conversation regarding the review. The CAC review report has been deferred to the next Board meeting for approval on March 5th.</p>	
8.)	<p>Toronto Youth Equity Strategy (TYES)</p> <p>The TYES Working Group met this week. Denise Campbell, City of Toronto also joined the meeting. The TYES recommendations focus on City agencies and housing with very little reference to Boards of Education. A meeting may be held with Jim and Denise. They anticipate meeting with two councillors. A task force was created with the</p>	<p>Co-Chair Penrose will invite Denise Campbell, City of Toronto to talk about the TYES Strategy at the next</p>

	<p>Board, and the City of Toronto for a conversation with Chair Bolton. There needs to be some clarification of the \$400,000 approved for the strategy. A final update and strategy is to be approved at the March meeting.</p> <p>A member asked what the numbers of students being incarcerated were and whether students get proper representation and equitable access to the legal system. For the TYES strategy, all data is compiled from the provincial, federal, and City. Need to look into the number of students doing time in custody before trials.</p> <p>Derik shared that he is working with a student leader, and shared that both the union and administration are against teachers writing recommendation letters. The question is, "if we can help students, why don't we?" African Canadian Legal Clinic (ACLC) provides free programs for Justice for Youth and ACLC. Referrals can be made at that moment in time, rather than later on. Christine, in reference to the letter of recommendation suggested that reference letters should only be done by the principal. It puts teachers under a lot of stress; who are pressured by parents to provide Academic recommendation letters.</p>	<p>meeting.</p>
<p>9.)</p>	<p>Black History Month Working Group</p> <p>The working group met briefly before the meeting today. After some discussion about the negative impacts of Black History Month (e.g. some systemic issues, and the Somali community not being considered, the group recommended that EPAC needs to pull together a committee consisting of various members to work as a Planning Committee for Black History Month. The committee will also do a feasibility study to prepare for next year. Members put forward the following motion:</p> <p>***MOTION: Kowser, seconded by Derik moved to request that staff support the creation of a committee to include community organizations, Instructional Leaders, Parents, Students, Teachers, Community Members, Members from the Business Community, and Board Administration including Executive Superintendent Jim Spyropoulos to review Black History Month related activities provided throughout the year. All in favour. Motion carried.</p> <p>Members: Kowser Omer, Derik Chica</p>	<p>Staff to provide an update at the next meeting regarding the creation of the Black History Month Committee.</p>
<p>10.)</p>	<p>Trustee Report</p> <p>Board Meeting The Feb 5th meeting was canceled due to the snow storm. A Special Board meeting was held yesterday. Members can follow Board meetings on-line.</p> <p>Somali Task Force (STF) Recommendations The recommendations from the STF will go to the Board Meeting on March 5. A special thanks goes to Superintendent Jim S. worked very hard with the ST. 100's of members did attend to the PSSC meeting. Hawaieh Egeh spoke about the recommendations. The Task Force wants the best for students and the programs and supports will be there to support them.</p> <p>Schools for Priority Capital Projects</p>	

	<p>Kent is closed. Bloor Collegiate (including TOPS program) moved students to Brockton. In June 2012, the Board approved 5 capital projects. The Bloor Collegiate Project was finally approved in October. It will take 3-5 years to complete. Local School Design Community met for a year to work on vision for the community. West Toronto Secondary schools was sold to two different schools. Dovercourt, Brock and Rawlinson will have extensions to gym. Brockton Pool is not being used at the moment, it will require retrofitting.</p> <p>Budget Meetings Ward forums will be held to offer budget information sessions. There will be one held on Feb 25th, 7pm. The Board used to leave budget approval to the end of the year. It is now done earlier, and with consultation with the community.</p> <p>Promotions Superintendent Jim S. is now Executive Superintendent. Congratulations to Jim.</p>	
11.)	<p>Staff Report</p> <p>CAC Review The CAC deputation was held during the January 23rd Planning and Priorities Committee meeting. The committee did not actually hear the report due to the number of agenda items that evening. It will be back before Planning and Priorities Committee in February.</p> <p>Community Liaison Groups (CLG) Review CLG's are independent of the Board who share common values and interests of the Board. They are currently undergoing a review. The Board is not committed to any financial supports in any way. Superintendent Jim S. will be glad to provide specifics of the relationships if anyone is interested.</p> <p>Focus On Youth (FOY) The FOY program will hire 200 students, ages 16 & 17 years old during the March Break. Students will require a Criminal Records Check. Members were asked to send Jim S. names of students by e-mail that may be interested in working during the March Break. The website has been open for applications since January 20th. Most students are applying for both March Break and the Summer.</p> <p>Mental Health Strategy The strategy was launched recently. There were several suicides last year. Information on the strategy may be found on the TDSB website.</p> <p>EPAC Support Superintendent Jim S. reported that Linda will be leaving as the Committee Assistant to EPAC due to another job opportunity. He thanked Linda for her support. Members wished Linda well in her new role.</p>	
12.)	<p>Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 9:20 PM.</p>	

13.)	Next Meeting: March 20 th , 6:30pm	
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